

Acharya Rameshwar Jha

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His Life Sketch

The life sketch and details of Acharya Rameshwar Jha life are available to us mainly from the introductory and prefatory notes that are available to us from his works collated in the form of few books. This collation has also been done mainly by his few students and disciples only. Rameshwar Jha was born on the eve of Vaisakha Shukla Pratipada Vikram Samvat Nineteen Hundred and Sixty Two or in the year Nineteen Hundred and Five AD at Samastipur Mithila Bihar, on the south banks of river Kareh, near Baba Kusheshwar Dhaam in village Patsa (Samastipur Bihar) a Shaiva, Brahmin- Kula family of great repute. His father was Yogiraj Shri Ayodhya Nath Jha ji and mother was Shrimati Rama Devi. His initial education was true to the old and traditional Brahmin family customs and practices. After his Yagyopavit Sanskaar, his initial education started in the traditional format through Sandhya-Gayatri, Shishu-Bodha and NahinDattPanchVinshatika. Later on, for his higher studies he got an opportunity to study Nyaya and Vyakarana under great Gurus of those days like; Pandit Shri RamaDatt Mishra, Shri Vidyanatha Jha, Shri MuktiNaath Mishra, Shri Raghunath Jha, Shri Radhakanta Jha and Shri Sadananda Jha. He completed degrees such as Prathma and Acaharya on Nyaya and Vyakarana with gold medals under these various Gurus. Later on, under the tutelage of Late Shri Ugrananda Jha ji he completed his studies on NyayaShastra and went on to become a stalwart and foremost authority among the Shastrarthi/scholastic Pandits of Kashi and Mithila during those days. Very early on in his studies of traditional shastras, his innate ability to resolve complicated and obfuscating problem constructs and concepts was greatly acclaimed and admired by his Gurus.

His Gurus and Teachers

He studied under the tutelage of great Pandits of the day like Shri RamDatta Mishra and Shri Vidyanatha Jha he also went on to study Nyaya Shastra under Shri Ugrananda Jha Ji at Kashi. He was also bestowed with the title of Vyakarancharya and Nayayacharya, someone who is an expert and is an authority on Vyakarana and Nayaya. He is most specially credited and is remembered with reverence by the greatest scholars of his time like Gopinath Kaviraj and many others especially for two specific reasons. One was his efforts to re-establish the Pratyabhijna school of the monistic philosophy of Kashmir in Kashi in its full glory. And the other one, was for reviving the traditional style of teaching (teaching 'line-by-line' style) of the Sastras in those days.

His Philosophy: Pratyabhijna School of Philosophy

Acharya Rameshwar Jha follower of the Pratyabhijna (Recognition) or Trika school of philosophy also known as Svatantryavada owing to the freedom of will or omnipotence. In his seminal work on this philosophical school he called it as 'Purnta Pratyabhijna' which means Full Recognition of the self or (Pratybhijna of Nij Purnta). It may be defined as a philosophical system which states that.

“When transcendental Lordliness is fully (Purnta) recognized in the self, either as a result of preceptorial instruction or recognition of the powers of knowledge and action, then immediately in the very life time there is final emancipation, characterized by perfection”.

A major drift happened in the spiritual life of Rameshwar Jha when Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj asked him to focus his studies on to the Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy or Pratyabhijna or Trika philosophy. This was around the year 1958 when at the behest of Gopinath Kaviraj, Acharya Rameshwar Jha first met Laxman Joo Ji Maharaj at his Ishwar Ashram Gupta Ganga situated at Srinagar Kashmir valley. It is said that at the very first meeting Rameshwar Jha had a Shaktipaat (showering of Shaiva grace) on him due to the blessings of Shri Laxman Joo Maharaj Ji and he was beholden by Acharya Rameshwar Jha as his Guru, right at that very moment only. Both had a sort of mutual feeling of respect toward the other and also had a reciprocal feeling of each one being a Guru to the other one.

It was Laxman Joo who prompted Acharya Rameshwar Jha to study Kashmir Saivism and Tantra Shastra quite in-depth and he continued his studies of the for around next thirty-five long years. His continuous studies of the Trika school for thirty-five long years culminated into the form of one of his most exhaustive and seminal work on the Pratyabhijna school of philosophy. This work was titled, 'Purnta- Pratyabhijna' and he completed this work in the Vikram Samvat 2017 or in the year 1961 AD, when he was about 55 years of age. As a result of this work and his teachings the Pratyabhijna school of philosophy regained its long-lost glory again in the 20th century in the Tantra Sastras in Kashi. This also reignited the passion and interest of great scholars in continuing the chain of glory of Tantra Sastra and Agamas, something that was becoming almost extinct after the days of the great Tantrik and scholar Shri Bhaskara Raya, almost three hundred years back. Acharya Rameshwar Jha was also awarded with the title of the 'Mahamahopadhyaya' by the Kashi Hindu VishvaVidyalya in Nineteen Hundred

and Eighty and in the year Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-One, by the ‘Rashtrapati-Sammanit and later on by the ‘ShastraChoodaMani award also.

His Major Works

It is estimated that Acharya Rameshwar Jha wrote around Ten Thousand slokas in his life time pertaining to the process of meditation (Sadhana), that are immensely helpful for a beginner as well as for an expert practitioner. These slokas are well preserved in his many hand written diaries. Numerous of such slokas have also been collated and published in various texts under his name although lots of them remains unpublished till date. Almost all of his works including his published correspondence was mostly in the form of Sanskrit verses (Slokas). He mostly adopted syllogism as his style of writing these Sanskrit verses, which were then mostly collected and edited at one place and published under a suitable title. Works written by him are as follows, namely; Purnta Pratyabhijna, Samvit Svantantryam, Shiv Tattva Vimarsha, Samvit Sphar, Guru Stuti (collection of praise worthy hymns devoted to his Guru Swami Laxman Joo), Sharika Charcha Stava (collection of his verses devoted to Sharika Devi) and KramaBhigyan. Along with the above works few of his very important and seminal writings in the form of articles were also published namely, (i) ‘Kundalini Prakash’-An article published in the Saraswati Sushma Magazine published from Banaras Hindu VishvaVidalya (ii) Article titled, ‘AhamArthah’ in the Sanmarga Tantra VisheshAnk (iii) Article titled, ‘AgamaVimarsa in the Sanmarga Agama VisheshAnk. All of these articles have also been written in the form of slokas and have been collated under a particular title and they also been written by making use of the syllogism style of narration by Acharya Rameshwar Jha.

Many a times he also used to write regular correspondence and letters to friends and acquaintances in Sanskrit verse form only. He used to regularly correspond with Prabha Devi the younger sister of Shri Sharika Devi who was a great Sadhika herself and a dedicated disciple of Shri Laxman Joo Ji Maharaj.

Rameshwar Jha wrote such shlokas and regularly made copious notes in his diaries and excerpts from some of his unpublished diaries are luckily available on public Internet in the form of his hand-written copious notes and verses. However, personally, he mostly remained engrossed in his studies and spiritual practices hardly ever showing any interest in getting his notes, shlokas and writings to be published in his lifetime ever and hence most of his works that are available have been published only at the behest of his students and disciples and due to their consistent efforts only.

Acharya Rameshwar Jha's analytical study of Vakyapadiyam

Rameshwar Jha also undertook an analytical study of Vakyapadiyam at the behest of one of his disciples. (Vakyapadim is an exquisite work on Grammar by the sage Bhartrihari written in the Ninth century). As a result of his in-depth analytical studies of this text Acharya Rameshwar Jha pointed out the contexts wherein the old commentators on this work were not able to do justice to this work. To elucidate such instances where more such clarifications and comments were warranted by ancient commentators, he himself made brief notes pointing out such places in a very special order and well thought and deeply analyzed format. This highly important and critical work on Vakyapadim remains to be published so far.

His work titled 'Shri Kramabhigyan' is another of his seminal work. In this work he has presented the creation of the universe (Sristi), in a philosophical sense for the first time. Like almost all of his works this work is also written in a sloka format.

How Acharya Rameshwar Jha Address the Doctrines of The Pratyabhijna System-Few Examples from his various works are as follows in this regard; The doctrine of 'Bimba-Pratibimba' Acharya Rameshwar Jha clarifies it in his text titled, 'Purnta Pratyabhijna, as follows;

Knowable objects are only reflected merely in the consciousness. They are reflected even without an object (Bimba)image only due to the self-energy (sva shakti). *Here a doubt arises; Reflection of an object existing without there being an object (Bimba) for it? This is the doubt here?*

There is a reason for the reflection of the object (Bimba) being produced-In the absence of an object a reflection of it still exists- What are you saying? Can you expect an effect existing despite the absence of a cause for it?

Its solution thereof explained by Acharya Rameshwar Jha-

Existence of an Effect in the absence of its Cause is not desired by us.

But existence of an object (Bimba) is not an Inherent cause (Samvayikaran) for its Image (Pratibimba) but it's an Intended or instrumental cause (Nimitta Karana) for the same. And the motive as such is not fixed for any particular effect (or a Karya).

That is why in the creation of a vessel (Ghata), the need to revolve the nucleus (Chaak) can be undertaken without a stick (Danda) even by a hand also, and on the basis of remembrance power (Smriti Shakti), a lover (Kami/Nayak) or his heroine (Kamini/Nayika) can view (or visualize) his or her lover.

LakshanSamanvayh (Reconciling the Characteristic):

Reconciling the characteristics- Inductance/Rendering/Demonstration (Uppaadan) of a reflection (Pratibimba) in the absence of an object (Bimba)

“There is a reflection (Pratibimba) in the absence of an object (Bimba)- “How can you say so, what to do? The characteristic or trait of a reflection (Pratibimba) is getting reconciled. One who is free (Svatantra), and is not mixed with anything else and is self-illuminated, that is known as an object (Bimba). Opposite of this is known as a reflection (Pratibimba). It’s mixed up with the other and is not self-illuminated. Just because of being a visual (Drashya) only, something lacking in form (Abhav), can’t be a reflection (Pratibimba). This world is also a reflection (Pratibimba). Because it’s all mixed up (Vyamishrit) with knowledge (Gyan), it does not exist (Bhasit) as different from knowledge (Gyan) but exist enclosed/attached with knowledge hence it’s a reflection (Pratibimba).

In his seminal article titled, “**AhamArthah**” published in the special issue on Tantra in the Sanmarga magazine published from Kashi Acharya Rameshwar Jha presented his deep insights in explicating upon this highly technical term of the Pratyabhijna school of philosophy. This is a unique collation of about One Hundred and Eleven Verses explaining the meaning of the word ‘Aham’ (“I”) encompassing this I-ness in all its entirety. Here he has defined and explained in very succinct verse the term “Aham’ correlating it with the power of action (Kriya Shakti), power of freedom (Svatantrya Shakti), Transcendental Speech (Para Vak), creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe, with pure light of consciousness (Samvid), Supreme Lord (Maheswara), Meditation (Bhakti), Moksha (emancipation) etc. He situates these entire verses by keeping his own self as the center stage in the form of a Saiva Yogi then identifies his own self with Maheswara. Having thus established himself in pure unity with the divine he then takes on the form of the Maheswara defining and explaining various meanings and shades of the term ‘I-ness’ (AhamArtha). As a result, as one reaches the end of these verses one would easily comprehend all the technical meanings of this term. The following example from this article will clarify his unique approach and expertise in understanding and explaining this term.

The Verse says,

AkraAngeasmi Chidroopahah Partranandasanyutah

Parahamvanchana Nityam BhasmanoAsmi Sustirahah : Verse No. Twelve

The above verse is to be interpreted as, *“I am Chid (Chit plus Ananda) in one part, and bliss (Ananda) in the other. I remain perfectly stable/undisturbed by manifesting through the power of free consciousness which is also simply my power of the transcendental speech (Para Vak).”*

In this system it is said; Self which is without a second and is pure light of consciousness (Samvid), is perfectly free. And free consciousness is non-different from light of consciousness. Further, the heart the resting place, (Hrdaya), of all is Mantra, which, in its essence is nothing but free consciousness, which also is simply the power of the transcendental speech (Para Vak). Here it is to be noted that this inter-play of the technical terms at play here, is highly technical in nature and is quite difficult for scholars and preceptors to grasp unless they have been explained properly by a learned Guru like **Acharya Rameshwar Jha**.

Here, in this school the word ‘**Svatma**’ has two connotations: (i) Self-hood (ii) Svatma (Svikiya Atma). Self-hood is one that always continue to manifest the supreme meaning (Parama Artha) and whose Bhava is of the form of Cidanandghan (a congealed mass of bliss). In the second sense its meaning is ‘the one that manifests (Svikiya Atma’ (Svatma), one that is of supreme meaning (Parama Artha) only and is also ‘Cidanandghan’. The Pratyabhijna system mostly likens the second meaning out of these two. Keeping in view the above clarifications the Verse No. Twelve of this article ‘Aham Artha’ has been clearly interpreted as above.

Likewise, in another of his text titled; ‘Samvit Svatantrya’ he follows the same technique as elucidated above that of presenting the whole gamut in an easy to understand Sanskrit verses. This text collates more than five hundred Sanskrit verses presenting the tenets of freedom of action omnipotence (Kartatva) in a very comprehensive way. Quite often he reiterates the term-definitions and revisit the key concepts by defining these terms many times over rendering them very clear and easy to grasp by a common man, by a scholar and by a practicing Saiva yogi alike. Here, in Samvit Svatantrya he addresses the key issue of meditation (Bhakti), in the Pratyabhijna school of philosophy of Kashmir Saivism. Quite often this issue is raised that whether if at all Bhakti is properly presented in the Kashmir Saivism philosophy and whether the Monistic Kashmir Saivism really recognizes and attests the Bhakti of the ParamaSiva at all. Acharya Rameshwar Jha states that,

“That Bhakti undertaken by the followers bears fruit for a limited span of time, and hence is not real in nature. But your grace is forever showered on me and hence it is not limited or not real in nature, but it is perpetual in nature.”

He further states that, “I only see Sivas grace (Sivas Kripa) only and not the Bhakti I undertake of Siva. As grace never ends. Its like the love showered by a mother on her children, never ending. But Bhakti takes Birth, it is (Janya). So, what if it gives birth to many boons.” And “I embrace Sivas grace (Sivas Kripa) only, and not the Bhakti showered at the feet of my Lord by a lover. The reason being that this Bhakti done by us mortals only grants limited powers but Sivas grace (Sivas Kripa) is eternal in nature. Hence, I embrace Sivas grace (Sivas Kripa) only, through my heartfelt refuge.”

Likewise, in another of his seminal work titled; Shiva Tattva Vimarshah, he has collated varied forms and definitions of Siva in its entirety according to the Pratyabhijna school of philosophy of Kashmir Saivism. In this text in around Hundred verses he has presented the varied forms and themes defining Siva in His multitude hues. The beauty of this work is that in almost each of these Hundred slokas he has collated a distinct form or feature, or an explanation related to one or the other aspect of Lord Siva. Just to give an example in verse number seventy-five he says, *“I am of the form of self and not-self in which lies sentient and insentient beings. The self being manifested as self-shining prohibits life and death.”*

Here it is to be noted that in this Pratyabhijna school of philosophy, the objects shine as distinct from one another, because of the light of universal consciousness (Prakasa). The essence however of that light of universal consciousness (Prakasa) is free-consciousness or Vimarsa. So, in the above verse it is stated that although I am of the form of the self or not-self in which lies all objective manifestation but it is the light of consciousness that prohibits life and death, because this free-consciousness or Vimarsa is non-different from the power of the light of consciousness.”. And Self, which is without a second and is this power of pure light of consciousness (Samvid), is perfectly free.

Acharya Rameshwar Jha has also written an extremely important and lucid gloss on the Agamas titled, ‘Agama Vimarsa’. This article has around thirty verses in Sanskrit along with other explanation encompassing almost all the definitions and connotations of on the word ‘Agama’.

Shakta Studies of Acharya Rameshwar Jha

Another of a scholarly article reflecting deep understanding of Acharya Rameshwar Jha of the Shakta Tantra literature is quite evident from his article Titled; “KundaliniPrakashah published in the annual Sanskrit magazine of the

Banaras Hindu University, Issue Twenty, Varsh First. In this article he has given varied definitions and practical aspects of meditation (Sadhna) of the “Kundalini” explaining its philosophical signification and also reflecting upon its exalted status in the Saiva Agamas and Monistic (Advait) Tantras alike. Here he also quotes extensively from various important texts of the Saiva Agamas. This article is of immense importance as it also establishes Acharya Rameshwar Jha as not just a follower of Monistic Saiva philosophy of Kashmir but is also a Shakti-one who meditates and propitiates Sakti also (A Sakti Upasaka). He is a Siva-Sakti Sadhaka or a Upasaka and he meditates both Siva-Sakti without any difference between the two.

Conclusion

In conclusion it could be stated that Acharya Rameshwar Jha was a highly respectable Scholar and a Saiva Sadhaka par excellence of the 20th century, who followed the Pratyabhijna school of the Monistic Kashmir Saivism philosophy in India. He is credited with the revival and re-establishment of the Tantra Shastras, Saiva Agamas and the Pratyabhijna or Trika school of philosophy of Kashmir Saivism at Kashi by making use of the traditional Sastric style of teaching and studying and interpreting the Sastras accordingly. He was highly respected by the scholars and Saiv Sadhaks of his day and was fondly called as Guru Ji by his followers and disciples and scholars alike. It was his great ability in lucidly explaining highly abstruse and technical concepts of the Kashmir Saivism and Saiva Agamas that sets him apart as a scholar and a Saiva Yogi par excellence. Due to his highly reputed scholarship and expertise as a Sanskrit Grammarian, a Nyaya expert and a Vedantin and he being an authority on Kashmir Saiva philosophy he will always be remembered as one of the most celebrated Saiva Yogi and Pratyabhijna or Trika philosopher of the 20th century. He passed away in Nineteen Hundred Eighty One and at that time he famously said that now “I am going to be a Purna” thereby meaning that now I am going to be in complete unity with Parama Siva.

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